

California commission recommends ripping out Klamath Dams

By **JEFF BARNARD**
The Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. -- California Energy Commission analysts urged Oregon, California and Washington to deny any requests from PacifiCorp to increase electricity rates to help pay for upgrading Klamath dams.

A Monday letter signed by California Energy Commission executive director B.B. Blevins asks the public utility commissions in each of the three states to authorize cost recovery only for decommissioning the four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River. Indian tribes, fishermen and conservation groups want the dams removed to open up spawning habitat for struggling salmon runs.

"The Energy Commission has a responsibility not only to provide reliable energy supplies, but to provide for the environment," said Chris Tooker, an energy policy analyst for the California Energy Commission. "It takes that balancing mandate seriously. The whole reason we are involved in the Klamath issue is to help educate the participants."

PacifiCorp is seeking a new license to operate the J.C. Boyle, Copco 1, Copco 2 and Iron Gate dams on the Klamath for the next 30 to 50 years. Though the dams only produce enough power for 70,000 households, PacifiCorp says its power that does not emit greenhouse gases.

The utility has said it would be willing to spend \$300 million on fish ladders and other improvements to meet a federal mandate to provide salmon a way to reach hundreds of miles of spawning habitat blocked for the past century. It has also said it would be willing to remove the dams if their ratepayers don't have to pay for it.

The Oregon Public Utility Commission does not currently have a request before it from PacifiCorp to recover those costs, said spokesman Bob Valdez.

PacifiCorp spokeswoman Jan Mitchell said the letter appeared to be a rehash of an earlier analysis commissioned by the California Energy Commission, which a consultant to PacifiCorp found to contain errors and mistaken assumptions.

Based on studies done for the California Energy Commission, removing the dams would cost \$38 million to \$71 million, and 30 years of replacement power would cost \$58 million to \$153 million, Blevins wrote. That works out to an economic benefit to PacifiCorp ratepayers for removing the dams of \$32 million to \$286 million.

Blevins discounted PacifiCorp's argument that it wants to keep the dams because, unlike coal-fired plants, they do not produce greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

He noted that the dams generate only 1 percent of PacifiCorp's power and replacing them with a wind farm or natural gas plant would cost about the same as upgrading the dams.

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